

**A DECADE PLUS FIVE:  
CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT  
IN INDIANA'S  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**BY**

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**REPORT #6**

**INDIANA EDUCATION SERVICES, INC.  
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# **A DECADE PLUS FIVE: IMPROVEMENT IN INDIANA'S SCHOOLS**

**Victor A. Smith, Ed.D.  
August, 2005**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

To many Hoosiers, the message will come as a surprise: Indiana's public schools clearly improved during the 1990's and in the five years of the current decade. The trends over these fifteen years are up, contradicting many stories and commercials claiming educational decline. The data are available from the Indiana Department of Education, the College Board, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, Postsecondary Opportunity and ACT, Inc. The verifiable conclusion is that the fifteen-year span has seen an upward swing on multiple indicators of school progress. Performance on ten indicators from the baseline year of 1988-89 through 2003-04 formed the basis for this positive conclusion:

### **1. ATTENDANCE RATE**

- ◆ Hoosier public schools have successfully raised daily attendance in 12 of the past 15 years to the highest level in our state's history.
- ◆ From 94.65% in 1988-89, attendance reached 95.87% in 2003-04, the highest level ever recorded and the 14<sup>th</sup> year in a row above 95%.
- ◆ The current higher rate means that due to better attendance across the state of Indiana, 9100 more students are showing up for school every day compared to 1988-89.

### **2. GRADUATION RATE**

- ◆ The graduation rate for 2003-04 stands at 89.79, the 4<sup>th</sup> highest level in state history, but down 1.33 points from the previous year.
- ◆ From 75.74 in '88-'89, the rate rose steadily to a high mark of 91.12 in 2002-03.
- ◆ Flaws in the way this rate is defined have led to a new law redefining the graduation rate. The new method will be used with the Class of 2006.

### **3. SAT VERBAL SCORES**

- ◆ Verbal scores rose from 490 in '88-'89 to an historic high of 501 in 2003-04.
- ◆ More years went up than down, including 5 up in a row ('91-'96).
- ◆ These gains came while Indiana tested 64% of all graduates, 16% more than the nation as a whole, thus giving more marginal students a chance at college.

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#### **4. SAT MATH SCORES**

- ◆ Math scores went up from 487 in '88-'89 to 506 in 2003-04, another top performance in state history.
- ◆ More years went up than down, including 7 years in a row ('91-'98) when scores either went up or stayed the same.

#### **5. ACT COMPOSITE SCORES**

- ◆ Indiana ACT scores have exceeded national scores in all 15 years of the study.
- ◆ Indiana's composite score on the ACT remained stable at 21.6 in 2003-04, the highest mark in state history.

#### **6. NATIONAL ASSESSMENT (NAEP) SCORES**

- ◆ On National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) basic scores, Indiana outperformed the nation on all 20 NAEP assessments since 1990, including tests of math, reading, science and writing.
- ◆ On the NAEP proficient standard, Indiana outperformed the nation on 16 of 20 tests.

#### **7. ISTEP ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS SCORES**

- ◆ In 20 year-to-year comparisons over 6 years and 4 grade levels, 12 (60%) went up, 6 (30%) went down, and 2 (10%) stayed the same. By a clear margin, more went up than down.
- ◆ The up and down trend is now clearly positive, a conclusion which could be not drawn in earlier years.

#### **8. ISTEP MATH SCORES**

- ◆ In 20 valid year-to-year comparisons, 14 (70%) went up, 3 (15%) remained stable, and 3 (15%) went down, showing a clear trend of improvement and a stronger overall showing than in English/Language Arts.

#### **9. PERCENT OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES GOING TO COLLEGE**

- ◆ The percent of graduates aspiring to go to college went up 14 of the 15 years to reach 71.06% in 2003-04, the highest level in state history.

#### **10. STUDENTS EARNING ACADEMIC HONORS OR CORE 40 DIPLOMAS**

- ◆ For all 15 years of the study, more students every year earned the 47-credit Academic Honors Diploma, reaching a total of 29.08% in 2003-04.
- ◆ For all 7 years when Core 40 diplomas were available, more students earned the Core 40 diploma each year, reaching a total of 36.13% in 2003-04.

## *CONCLUSION*

Improvement is clear. The data show that public schools in Indiana have done much better than is widely believed. The positive trends of the past fifteen years do not, however, change the need for schools to do even better in the future. Continuous improvement must be a common goal for schools. School reforms must be firmly based on accurate assessments of the challenging path schools have already traversed as plans for future improvements are made.

This is a summary of a 28-page report available by contacting [vicsmith@iupui.edu](mailto:vicsmith@iupui.edu).

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Indiana Education Services, Inc., is owned and operated  
by Dr. Victor Smith and is dedicated to providing  
accurate and useful information for and  
about Indiana schools.

**August, 2005**

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## INTRODUCTION

This report has become an annual report. First published in May, 2000, as a review of Indiana public school gains in the 1990's, this sixth annual report documents a fifteen-year trend still unknown to many Hoosiers: Indiana's public schools clearly improved during the 1990's, and they continue to improve in the new decade. Contradicting hearsay stories about educational decline, the hard data reveal that trends continue to go up, not down, on key education indicators.

Data are now available to extend the charts presented in last year's report by one more year. Once again, data are clearly displayed to allow all concerned to check the analysis. The data are available from the Indiana Department of Education, the College Board, ACT, NAEP, and Postsecondary Opportunity. The conclusion is that improvement in student performance in Indiana's public schools continued in 2003-2004 when seven of the ten indicators showed new gains, two were unchanged, and one declined. Over the fifteen year span, all ten indicators have clearly improved; some have improved remarkably.

**OVER THE FIFTEEN YEAR  
SPAN, ALL TEN INDICATORS  
HAVE CLEARLY IMPROVED;  
SOME HAVE IMPROVED  
REMARKABLY.**

## MEASURES EXAMINED

What are these ten key indicators? All ten are continued from last year's report: attendance rate, graduation rate, ISTEP reading and math scores, SAT verbal and math scores, the percentage of Hoosier students going to college, the percentage of graduates earning the more rigorous Academic Honors and Core 40 diplomas, Indiana's performance on the ACT test and Indiana's performance on the National Assessment (NAEP) since 1990. Taken as a group, these are the data indicators that must be considered in attempting to answer the frequently asked question: How are the schools doing?

## CONTINUOUS PROGRESS

The record of the past fifteen years for Indiana's schools is far better than is generally realized. When examined for year-to-year improvement over the fifteen-year period of this report, the ups far outnumber the downs. A pattern of continuous improvement has been established. Hoosier public schools have performed better than most citizen's think. This is reflected in the following findings that are documented in the remaining pages:

- Indiana has set historically high marks in 12 of the 15 years for attendance rate and in 11 of the 15 years for graduation rate.
- Over 70% of high school graduates now aspire to go to college and 62% actually enroll the next year, percentages that are high marks in state history in both cases.
- More than 29% of 2004 graduates received Academic Honors diplomas, and an additional 36% received Core 40 diplomas, both record marks in state history.
- Indiana SAT scores, while representing a far higher percentage of students tested than the nation as a whole, have risen 30 points in fifteen years, while national scores have risen 20 points.
- Indiana ACT scores have surpassed national averages for over a decade and equaled the highest mark in state history this year.
- Indiana National Assessment basic scores and proficient scores have consistently outperformed the nation since 1990 in multiple subjects.
- In year-to-year comparisons when the test didn't change, ISTEP scores for general education students have gone up 12 of 20 times (60%) in English/Language Arts and 14 of 20 times (70%) in Math.

This picture of continuous progress will be dismissed by many who are convinced, and have told others, that Indiana public schools are in decline. The data, all of which are available to the public, do not however support the perception of decline. To the contrary, the data provide evidence of progress, ranging in degree from modest to impressive gains.

This conclusion does not, of course, address the question of whether schools have improved enough. Educators are aware that the demands of a global economy require constant improvement. Debates about the speed of improvements and measures to eliminate achievement gaps have intensified since the *No Child Left Behind Act* was signed into law by President Bush in January, 2002. The debate is fueled by a controversial definition of Adequate Yearly Progress. This report does not explore the question of adequate improvement but instead seeks to put improvement trends in historical context since the end of the 1980's. Efforts to improve schools must be based on a clear understanding of this historical record in order to foster further improvement and avoid missteps which would reverse the positive trends.

**TO THE CONTRARY, THE DATA  
PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS,  
RANGING IN DEGREE FROM  
MODEST TO IMPRESSIVE GAINS.**

### **MEASURING IMPROVEMENT**

The approach to measuring improvement in this report is planted firmly on the spirit of self-comparison found in Indiana's accountability law, Public Law 221-1999. Under this law, improvement is to be assessed by comparing "each school and each school corporation to its own prior performance and not to the performance of other schools or school corporations." [P.L. 221-1999, Section 13, Chapter 5. Sec.2.(a)]

No comparisons are made with other states, comparisons which are shaky at best, given different state rules and measurement systems. For example, the College Board itself directly cautions against using SAT scores for comparisons among states.

Using a framework of self-comparison to prior performance, a chart has been developed for each indicator which displays fifteen years. A baseline is established using 1988-89, the year prior to the start of the 1990's. Then the performance for each of the next fifteen years is listed.

When the same measure is used from year to year, it is appropriate to see whether the measure went up or went down. Such movement is clearly noted in the tables. The collective trend of year-to-year changes is the basis for determining improvement. It is a clear way of answering the public's question: Are we up, are we down or have we stayed the same?

Where measurement techniques changed, year-to-year comparisons are of course inappropriate. Data for such years are marked "NEW" in the tables and are not counted as improvement or decline. A narrative preceding each of the ten tables explains both the measure and the trends. Considering all ten as a whole justifies the apparent and well supported conclusion that the performance of Indiana's public school students has improved steadily and consistently over the past fifteen years.

**... WELL SUPPORTED  
CONCLUSION THAT THE  
PERFORMANCE OF INDIANA'S PUBLIC  
SCHOOL STUDENTS HAS IMPROVED  
STEADILY AND CONSISTENTLY OVER  
THE PAST FIFTEEN YEARS.**

## 1. PUBLIC SCHOOL ATTENDANCE RATE

### WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The A+ reforms led by Gov. Robert Orr and State Superintendent Dean Evans made student attendance a priority as a first step toward higher achievement. In 1987-88, these new laws established a new procedure for tracking attendance which has remained stable since then. For the first time in our state's history, consistent comparisons of attendance from year to year were available for an entire decade. Attendance figures are available from the Indiana Department of Education, Division of Educational Information Systems. In figuring which schools make Adequate Yearly Progress under the federal *No Child Left Behind Act*, progress toward 95% attendance is now a factor for all schools except high schools.

### WHAT ARE THE TRENDS?

- Attendance went up by 0.17% in 2003-04 to 95.87%. This is the highest level ever recorded and the 14th year in a row above 95%. Hoosier public schools showed increased attendance in 12 of the past 15 years to reach the highest levels in our history.
- While annual gains appear to be small, they are significant. With over 900,000 enrolled, small changes represent many students. **The current rate means that, due to better attendance in 2003-04, over 9100 more Hoosier students showed up for school every day than was the case in 1988-89.**

Figure 1:	1988-89 100% - 94.65% rate = 5.35% absent x 919,689 =	49,203
	2003-04 100% - 95.87% rate = 4.13% absent x 970,619 =	40,087
	Fewer absent in 2003-04 on an average day =	9,116

- The positive attendance trend clearly indicates increased school efficiency as it relates to attendance.
- Indiana public schools, following expectations established in 1987, have built a climate of higher expectations in the area of attendance. Students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members have all contributed to better attendance. Motivational talks, incentive programs, health clinics, performance reviews and home visits are among the efforts that have supported this record of improvement.

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TABLE 1: INDIANA PUBLIC SCHOOL AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE			
Base Year:	1988-89	<b>94.65%</b>	
1990's Year 1:	1989-90	<b>94.94%</b>	<b>UP</b>
1990's Year 2:	1990-91	<b>95.14%</b>	<b>UP</b>
1990's Year 3:	1991-92	<b>95.27%</b>	<b>UP</b>
1990's Year 4:	1992-93	<b>95.30%</b>	<b>UP</b>
1990's Year 5:	1993-94	<b>95.31%</b>	<b>UP</b>
1990's Year 6:	1994-95	<b>95.28%</b>	<b>DOWN</b>
1990's Year 7:	1995-96	<b>95.39%</b>	<b>UP</b>
1990's Year 8:	1996-97	<b>95.50%</b>	<b>UP</b>
1990's Year 9:	1997-98	<b>95.57%</b>	<b>UP</b>
1990's Year 10:	1998-99	<b>95.63%</b>	<b>UP</b>
2000's Year 1:	1999-00	<b>95.79%</b>	<b>UP</b>
2000's Year 2:	2000-01	<b>95.75%</b>	<b>DOWN</b>
2000's Year 3:	2001-02	<b>95.85%</b>	<b>UP</b>
2000's Year 4:	2002-03	<b>95.70%</b>	<b>DOWN</b>
2000's Year 5:	2003-04	<b>95.87%</b>	<b>UP</b>
<i>Data Source: Indiana Department of Education, Div. of Educational Information Systems</i>			

## 2. GRADUATION RATE

### WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

Since the A+ reforms of 1987, the graduation rate has been collected consistently as follows: *For the graduation class of any year, the percentage of the class that did **not** drop out in Grade 9 is figured based on the October enrollment of Grade 9. Then the percentage that did **not** drop out in Grade 10 is calculated based on October enrollment in Grade 10. Similar figures are found for Gr. 11 and Gr. 12. Then all four percentages are multiplied together. Example:  $.95 \times .94 \times .96 \times .95 = 81.44$ . In 1995-96, summer graduates were counted with the previous year rather than the following year, accounting for a higher than usual increase that year.*

With its focus totally on drop outs during the school year, the current graduation rate cannot be interpreted as a percentage of a class that graduates. A quick look at the definition shows that it does not account for students who do not come back to school in the fall. After 1999 accountability legislation, dissatisfaction grew with a rate that did not account for every student. Controversy over the graduation rate as an indicator of progress surfaced in the 2000 campaign for Governor. In 2003 and again in 2005, the General Assembly passed new definitions, to be phased in for the Class of 2006. An analysis of the old and new definitions is found in the Appendix of this report. Notwithstanding the appropriateness of the formula used, the rate has been calculated the same way since 1987 making the figures in Table 2 useful to determine progress.

In 1984, minimum graduation credits were raised from 32 to 38. The State Board raised that level to 40 credits, effective for the Class of 2004. The biggest change affected the Class of 2000, when the requirement to pass the Graduation Qualifying Examination took hold, prompting predictions of a lower rate.

### WHAT ARE THE TRENDS?

- Graduation rate has gone up 11 of the past 15 years, rising 14 points.
- From 1994 to 1999, Indiana reached a new historic high each year.
- The Class of 2004, despite higher standards, recorded the fourth highest graduation rate in state history, 89.79, down from the previous year.
- The Class of 2004 was the first in which 40 credits were required to graduate, in addition to passing the GQE. The 1.33 point drop indicates that more students dropped out than during any of the three previous years. The drop should be studied closely next year to see if a downward trend is developing.

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**TABLE 2: INDIANA PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE**

Base Year:	1988-89	<b>75.74%</b>	
1990's Year 1:	1989-90	<b>78.10%</b>	<b>UP</b>
1990's Year 2:	1990-91	<b>81.11%</b>	<b>UP</b>
1990's Year 3:	1991-92	<b>82.46%</b>	<b>UP</b>
1990's Year 4:	1992-93	<b>83.44%</b>	<b>UP</b>
1990's Year 5:	1993-94	<b>82.60%</b>	<b>DOWN</b>
1990's Year 6:	1994-95	<b>82.64%</b>	<b>UP</b>
1990's Year 7:	1995-96	<b>86.43%</b>	<b>NEW</b>
1990's Year 8:	1996-97	<b>88.19%</b>	<b>UP</b>
1990's Year 9:	1997-98	<b>88.41%</b>	<b>UP</b>
1990's Year 10:	1998-99	<b>89.76%</b>	<b>UP</b>
2000's Year 1:	1999-00	<b>89.58% *</b>	<b>DOWN</b>
2000's Year 2:	2000-01	<b>90.40%</b>	<b>UP</b>
2000's Year 3:	2001-02	<b>91.05%</b>	<b>UP</b>
2000's Year 4:	2002-03	<b>91.12 %</b>	<b>UP</b>
2000's Year 5:	2003-04	<b>89.79%</b>	<b>DOWN</b>

*Data Source: Indiana Department of Education, Div. of Educational Information Systems*

*\* IDOE revised the 1999-00 figure since June, 2001, when it was reported as 89.47.*

*IDOE revises figures when local districts submit corrected data from past years.*



### 3. SAT VERBAL SCORES

#### **WHAT IS THE MEASURE?**

Scholastic Achievement Tests (SAT) were not designed to be measures of statewide school achievement. They were, as implied in the original name, Scholastic Aptitude Tests, developed to predict the success of individuals going to college. The popular press and many others have ignored the cautions against inter-state comparisons issued by the publisher, the College Board:

“Thus, to make useful comparisons of students’ performance between states, a common test given to all students would be required. Because the percentage of SAT takers varies widely among the states, and because the test takers are self-selected, the SAT is inappropriate for this purpose.” (from Guidelines on the Uses of College Board Test Scores, 1998, The College Board)

In the same statement about SAT use, the College Board states: “This is not to say, however, that scores cannot be used properly as one indicator of educational quality. Average scores analyzed from a number of years can reveal trends in the academic preparation of students who take the test and can provide individual states and schools with a means of self-evaluation and self-comparison.”

Self-comparison is the approach taken in this report. The scale puts the average at 500 and a perfect score at 800. The test measures two crucial skill domains, verbal and quantitative. Each is scored separately.

#### **WHAT ARE THE TRENDS?**

- Indiana students raised their average verbal score by 1 point in 2003-04, reaching the highest level in state history.
- In fifteen years, verbal scores have gone up 11 points.
- The average has gone up more years than it has gone down, including increases five years in a row from 1991 to 1996.
- At the end of fifteen years, Indiana had reduced the 14 point deficit from the national average to 7 points.
- The 2003-04 participation rate of 64% was the highest in state history.
- These gains came while Indiana tested far more (by 15% to 18% more) than the nation as a whole, thus giving more marginal students a chance at college. Improving total scores while maintaining the high participation of borderline students is a remarkable indicator of progress.

**IMPROVING TOTAL SCORES WHILE  
MAINTAINING THE HIGH  
PARTICIPATION OF BORDERLINE  
STUDENTS IS A REMARKABLE  
INDICATOR OF PROGRESS.**



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TABLE 3: INDIANA SAT VERBAL SCORES

Indiana Verbal				Nat'l Verbal	Test Takers as % of H.S. Graduates	
					IN	Nat'l
Base Year:	1988-89	<b>490</b>		504	<b>57%</b>	40%
1990's Year 1:	1989-90	<b>486</b>	<b>DOWN</b>	500	<b>56%</b>	40%
1990's Year 2:	1990-91	<b>485</b>	<b>DOWN</b>	499	<b>58%</b>	42%
1990's Year 3:	1991-92	<b>486</b>	<b>UP</b>	500	<b>59%</b>	42%
1990's Year 4:	1992-93	<b>487</b>	<b>UP</b>	500	<b>60%</b>	42%
1990's Year 5:	1993-94	<b>488</b>	<b>UP</b>	499	<b>60%</b>	42%
1990's Year 6:	1994-95	<b>492</b>	<b>UP</b>	504	<b>58%</b>	41%
1990's Year 7:	1995-96	<b>494</b>	<b>UP</b>	505	<b>57%</b>	41%
1990's Year 8:	1996-97	<b>494</b>	<b>STABLE</b>	505	<b>57%</b>	42%
1990's Year 9:	1997-98	<b>497</b>	<b>UP</b>	505	<b>59%</b>	43%
1990's Year 10:	1998-99	<b>496</b>	<b>DOWN</b>	505	<b>60%</b>	43%
2000's Year 1:	1999-00	<b>498</b>	<b>UP</b>	505	<b>60%</b>	44%
2000's Year 2:	2000-01	<b>499</b>	<b>UP</b>	506	<b>60%</b>	45%
2000's Year 3:	2001-02	<b>498</b>	<b>DOWN</b>	504	<b>62%</b>	46%
2000's Year 4:	2002-03	<b>500</b>	<b>UP</b>	507	<b>63%</b>	48%
2000's Year 5:	2003-04	<b>501</b>	<b>UP</b>	508	<b>64%</b>	48%

*Data Source: The College Board, Midwestern Regional Office*

## 4. SAT MATH SCORES

### **WHAT IS THE MEASURE?**

Scholastic Achievement Tests (SAT) math scores are the second part of the test described above. Readers should keep in mind that students self-select to take the SAT tests, acting on the guidance of parents, teachers and counselors. Some students choose to take the ACT test. Indiana has traditionally been a big “SAT state” and a small “ACT state”. Smaller numbers of Hoosier students take the ACT, presumably representing students applying to out-of-state colleges. The ACT averages for Indiana have always been above average, a fact often ignored by both the media and by educational researchers.

### **WHAT ARE THE TRENDS?**

- Indiana students raised their average math score by 2 points to 506 in the 2003-04 school year, the highest mark in state history.
- The average has gone up more years than it has gone down, including seven years in a row (1991-98) when scores either went up or stayed the same, similar to the pattern for SAT verbal scores.
- At the end of fifteen years, Indiana’s gain of 19 points surpassed the national gain of 16 points even though Indiana tested a far higher percentage of students.
- SAT math scores jumped by 2 points in 2003-04. In the fifteen years studied, this positive gain was surpassed by gains of 3 points in three other years: 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1999-00. One other larger increase of 6 points was recorded in 1993-94.
- Again, these gains occurred while Indiana consistently tested far more students (ranging from 15% to 18% more each year) than the nation as a whole, thus giving more students, including more marginal students, an opportunity to go to college.

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**TABLE 4: INDIANA SAT MATH SCORES**

Indiana Math				Nat'l Math	Test Takers as % of H.S. Graduates	
					IN	Nat'l
Base Year:	1988-89	<b>487</b>		502	57%	40%
1990's Year 1:	1989-90	<b>486</b>	<b>DOWN</b>	501	56%	40%
1990's Year 2:	1990-91	<b>485</b>	<b>DOWN</b>	500	58%	42%
1990's Year 3:	1991-92	<b>487</b>	<b>UP</b>	501	59%	42%
1990's Year 4:	1992-93	<b>487</b>	<b>STABLE</b>	503	60%	42%
1990's Year 5:	1993-94	<b>493</b>	<b>UP</b>	504	60%	42%
1990's Year 6:	1994-95	<b>494</b>	<b>UP</b>	506	58%	41%
1990's Year 7:	1995-96	<b>494</b>	<b>STABLE</b>	508	57%	41%
1990's Year 8:	1996-97	<b>497</b>	<b>UP</b>	511	57%	42%
1990's Year 9:	1997-98	<b>500</b>	<b>UP</b>	512	59%	43%
1990's Year 10:	1998-99	<b>498</b>	<b>DOWN</b>	511	60%	43%
2000's Year 1:	1999-00	<b>501</b>	<b>UP</b>	514	60%	44%
2000's Year 2:	2000-01	<b>501</b>	<b>STABLE</b>	514	60%	45%
2000's Year 3:	2001-02	<b>503</b>	<b>UP</b>	516	62%	46%
2000's Year 4:	2002-03	<b>504</b>	<b>UP</b>	519	63%	48%
2000's Year 5:	2003-04	<b>506</b>	<b>UP</b>	518	64%	48%

*Data Source: The College Board, Midwestern Regional Office*

## 5. ACT COMPOSITE SCORES

### **WHAT IS THE MEASURE?**

ACT tests were developed as an alternative to the SAT tests by two professors in Iowa City, Iowa, in the 1950's. The curriculum-based tests measure achievement in English, mathematics, reading and science reasoning. The composite score for each student summarizes the results for all four tests.

As indicated previously, Indiana has been a big "SAT state" and a small "ACT state". Smaller numbers of Hoosier students take the ACT, presumably representing students applying to out-of-state colleges.

In 1990, the ACT revised the test to the point that comparisons with scores prior to 1990 are not meaningful.

**INDIANA ACT SCORES EXCEEDED NATIONAL SCORES IN EVERY YEAR OF THE STUDY.**

### **WHAT ARE THE TRENDS?**

- Indiana's composite score on the ACT remained at 21.6 in 2003-04, the highest mark in state history.
- In fifteen years, Indiana's ACT scores have gone up by 0.6 points while national averages have risen 0.3 points.
- Indiana ACT scores exceeded national scores in every year of the study.
- Scores went up in more years than they went down, including long spans of five or six years in a row (1991-96 and the current string of 1998-2004) when scores either went up or stayed the same, similar to the pattern for SAT verbal scores.
- At the end of fifteen years, Indiana had extended the advantage over national average scores from 0.4 to 0.7.
- Indiana consistently tested about one-fifth (20%) of all high school graduates in the ACT testing program.

# ACT

# ISTEP

# SAT

**TABLE 5: INDIANA ACT COMPOSITE SCORES**

Indiana					Nat'l	Test Takers as % of H.S. Graduates	
						IN	Nat'l
1990's Year 1:	1989-90	21.0		20.6	n/a	n/a	
1990's Year 2:	1990-91	20.9	DOWN	20.6	n/a	n/a	
1990's Year 3:	1991-92	21.0	UP	20.6	n/a	n/a	
1990's Year 4:	1992-93	21.0	STABLE	20.7	n/a	n/a	
1990's Year 5:	1993-94	21.2	UP	20.8	21%	36%	
1990's Year 6:	1994-95	21.2	STABLE	20.8	22%	37%	
1990's Year 7:	1995-96	21.3	UP	20.9	19%	35%	
1990's Year 8:	1996-97	21.2	DOWN	21.0	19%	36%	
1990's Year 9:	1997-98	21.4	UP	21.0	20%	37%	
1990's Year 10:	1998-99	21.2	DOWN	21.0	19%	36%	
2000's Year 1:	1999-00	21.4	UP	21.0	20%	38%	
2000's Year 2:	2000-01	21.4	STABLE	21.0	20%	38%	
2000's Year 3:	2001-02	21.5	UP	20.8	19%	39%	
2000's Year 4:	2002-03	21.6	UP	20.8	21%	40%	
2000's Year 5:	2003-04	21.6	STABLE	20.9	20%	40%	

*Data Source: ACT, Inc., Indiana ACT Profile, 2003 and [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)*

## 6. NATIONAL ASSESSMENT (NAEP) SCORES

### **WHAT IS THE MEASURE?**

The National Assessment of Educational Progress, often called “the nation’s report card,” is according to Reese, et. al. (1997) “the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America’s students know and can do in various subject areas.” Table 6 compares the Indiana and national percentages of students scoring at or above basic and at or above proficient. An additional standard is called “advanced”.

Indiana did not have a sufficiently large sample to receive a score in some national assessments. Table 6 shows the complete list of the years in which Indiana participated. As a result of legislation passed in 1999, local schools are now required to participate if they are selected for the NAEP random sample. At the same time this requirement was established, the requirement to take the norm-referenced portion of ISTEP was dropped. NAEP scores have thus been elevated as key measures of comparing Indiana and national performance levels.

### **WHAT ARE THE TRENDS?**

- In math, reading, science and writing, Indiana has consistently outperformed the national average on the basic standard on every one of the twenty tests where comparisons between Indiana and the nation are possible.
- On the proficient standard, Indiana outperformed the nation on 16 of 20 tests. Of three tests where Indiana lagged the nation, two were in writing.
- In math, remarkable improvement through the 1990’s can be seen in the advantage over national average scores, a positive gap which reached double digits in 1996 and 2000.
- In science, another double digit advantage over national scores was recorded in 2000 at Grade 4.
- Indiana percentages passing NAEP basic appear to be in the same general ballpark as Indiana percentages passing ISTEP+, as seen on pages 17 and 19.

**INDIANA HAS CONSISTENTLY OUTPERFORMED THE NATIONAL AVERAGE ON THE BASIC STANDARD ON EVERY ONE OF THE TWENTY TESTS.**

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**TABLE 6: INDIANA NAEP SCORES:  
PERCENT AT OR ABOVE BASIC AND PROFICIENT**

		% AT OR ABOVE BASIC			% AT OR ABOVE PROFICIENT		
		INDIANA	US	IN:US Gap	INDIANA	US	IN:US Gap
<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Gr.4 1992</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>+3</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>-1</b>
	<b>Gr.4 1996</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>+11</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>+5</b>
	<b>Gr.4 2000</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>+13</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>+8</b>
	<b>Gr.4 2003</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>+6</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>+4</b>
	<b>Gr.8 1990</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>+5</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>+2</b>
	<b>Gr.8 1992</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>+4</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>even</b>
	<b>Gr.8 1996</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>59%*</b>	<b>+9</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>+2</b>
	<b>Gr.8 2000</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>62%*</b>	<b>+12</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>+4</b>
	<b>Gr.8 2003</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>+7</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>+4</b>
<b>Reading</b>	<b>Gr.4 1992</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>+8</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>+3</b>
	<b>Gr.4 1994</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>+7</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>+5</b>
	<b>Gr.4 2002</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>+6</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>+3</b>
	<b>Gr.4 2003</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>+4</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>+3</b>
	<b>Gr.8 2002</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>+3</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>+1</b>
	<b>Gr.8 2003</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>+5</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>+3</b>
<b>Science</b>	<b>Gr.4 2000</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>+11</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>+4</b>
	<b>Gr.8 1996</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>+5</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>+3</b>
	<b>Gr.8 2000</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>+9</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>+5</b>
<b>Writing</b>	<b>Gr.4 2002</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>+3</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>-1</b>
	<b>Gr.8 2002</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>+1</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>-4</b>

Data Source: [nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states/profile](http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states/profile)

## 7. ISTEP ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS SCORES: CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS (CRT)

### WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

A criterion-referenced test (CRT) measures student performance against a fixed standard, or criterion. When ISTEP+ was born in 1996, a procedure called “bookmarking” was used involving language arts and math teachers in setting a standard for a competent student on each test. While the Grade 10 standard for graduation received the most attention, standards in all four grades were set.

The 1996 and 1997 tests were not equated to allow valid year-to-year comparisons. Equated tests began in 1997, making that year the baseline for future comparisons. The next year, 1998-99, comparisons could properly be made, except in Grade 8, for which a new, higher standard was set. New tests aligned with new standards began in 2002-03 in Grades 3, 6 and 8, and no comparisons were appropriate that year. Thus, for this report, 20 grade levels in six years can be fairly and properly compared.

In 1997, federal law required students with disabilities to be included in state testing. Thus, more special education students and English Language Learners, many requiring test accommodations, have been tested each year. The middle column of Table 7 shows how counts have jumped each year. With a disproportionate percentage of accommodation students, comparing totals from year to year is invalid. A better measure is a year-to-year comparison of general education students taking the test without accommodations. General education student counts have remained even, allowing for fair comparisons.

Statewide norm-referenced tests were given for the last time in Fall, 2000. Criterion-referenced tests are now the only statewide ISTEP data available.

### WHAT ARE THE TRENDS?

- With 20 comparisons in the table, 12 (60%) went up, 6 (30%) went down, and 2 (10%) stayed the same. The trend is now clearly positive, a conclusion which could not be drawn in previous years.
- In reviewing the up and down trends, recent years have shown more consistent improvement.
- The large increases in the number of special education students tested, seen in the middle column, continued in 2003-04, and they showed more success.

**TABLE 7: ISTEP ENG/LANG ARTS CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS**  
Percent passing the standard for each grade

Base Year: 1988-89 Spring Testing (March)	1990's Year 4: 1992-93 Spring Testing (March)
1990's Year 1: 1989-90 Spring Testing (March)	1990's Year 5: 1993-94 Spring Testing (March)
1990's Year 2: 1990-91 Spring Testing (March)	1990's Year 6: 1994-95 Spring Testing (March)
1990's Year 3: 1991-92 Spring Testing (March)	1990's Year 7: 1995-96 Spring Testing (March)
<b>FALL TESTING BEGINS</b>	
1990's Year 8: 1996-97 Test not equated for annual comparisons and disaggregated data not available until '97-'98	



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		All Students / %		Spec.Ed. & / % Accommodations		General Ed. / % No Accommodations		
GR 3 ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS								
1990's Year 9:	1997-98	68,783	68%	1450	46%	67,333	69%	NEW
1990's Year 10:	1998-99	73,278	68%	4207	30%	69,071	70%	UP
2000's Year 1:	1999-00	75,150	68%	6558	35%	68,592	71%	UP
2000's Year 2:	2000-01	76,243	63%	8940	27%	67,303	68%	DOWN
2000's Year 3:	2001-02	75,922	66%	10,083	33%	65,839	71%	UP
2000's Year 4:	2002-03	74,945	72%	10,422	38%	64,523	78%	NEW
2000's Year 5:	2003-04	75,893	74%	12,104	43%	63,789	80%	UP
GR 6 ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS								
1990's Year 9:	1997-98	63,786	62%	1273	26%	62,513	63%	NEW
1990's Year 10:	1998-99	67,859	59%	4179	15%	63,680	62%	DOWN
2000's Year 1:	1999-00	72,251	56%	6668	12%	65,583	60%	DOWN
2000's Year 2:	2000-01	77,170	52%	9648	10%	67,522	57%	DOWN
2000's Year 3:	2001-02	79,047	52%	10,314	11%	68,733	58%	UP
2000's Year 4:	2002-03	80,407	69%	11,060	24%	69,347	76%	NEW
2000's Year 5:	2003-04	79,851	69%	12,107	27%	67,744	77%	UP
GR 8 ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS								
1990's Year 9:	1997-98	64,711	75%	1487	32%	63,224	76%	NEW
1990's Year 10:	1998-99	69,319	70%	4758	21%	64,561	74%	** NEW
2000's Year 1:	1999-00	70,540	69%	6595	20%	63,945	74%	SAME
2000's Year 2:	2000-01	71,889	68%	8739	18%	63,150	75%	UP
2000's Year 3:	2001-02	75,285	68%	9704	18%	65,581	76%	UP
2000's Year 4:	2002-03	77,713	64%	10,726	17%	66,987	71%	NEW
2000's Year 5:	2003-04	79,894	65%	11,626	21%	68,268	72%	UP
						** Gr. 8 standard was raised		
GR 10 ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS								
1990's Year 9:	1997-98	68,676	73%	5252	21%	63,424	77%	NEW
1990's Year 10:	1998-99	70,445	72%	6420	21%	64,025	78%	UP
2000's Year 1:	1999-00	70,429	70%	7070	20%	63,359	75%	DOWN
2000's Year 2:	2000-01	71,041	69%	7783	19%	63,258	75%	SAME
2000's Year 3:	2001-02	71,145	68%	7980	19%	63,165	74%	DOWN
2000's Year 4:	2002-03	70,973	68%	8580	21%	62,393	75%	UP
2000's Year 5:	2003-04	75,118	69%	10,018	23%	65,100	76%	UP
	# UP	12 (60%)						
	# STABLE	2 (10%)						
	# DOWN	6 (30%)						
Data Source: Indiana Department of Education, Office of Assessment								

## 8. ISTEP MATH SCORES: CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS (CRT)

### WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The criterion-referenced test (CRT) for math mirrors the same test for English/Language Arts described above. "Bookmarking" was used with a representative group of math teachers providing suggestions to inform the Education Roundtable's recommendations of the cut scores for passing the test.

As in the case of reading, valid comparisons could not be made until 1998-99. Even then, Grade 8 was given a new and higher standard, setting a new baseline for that level. Then in 2002-03, new tests based on new standards were introduced. Thus, for the time span of this report, 20 appropriate year-to-year comparisons (3 in '98-'99 ; 4 in '99-'00; 4 in '00-'01; 4 in '01-'02; 1 in '02-'03; 4 in '03-'04) can be made for general education students.

Since 1997 federal legislation required all students with disabilities to be included in state testing, more and more special education students and English Language Learners requiring test accommodations have been tested each year. The middle column of Table 8 shows how these counts have jumped annually. With an ever-increasing percentage of accommodation students, it is invalid to compare totals from year to year. The appropriate measure is the year-to-year comparison of general education students taking the test without accommodations. As Table 8 shows, the total count for general education students has remained reasonably steady, allowing for fair comparisons.

As described above, criterion-referenced test data will be the only statewide data available for analysis since mandated normed-referenced testing ended after 2000-01.

### WHAT ARE THE TRENDS?

- In 20 valid comparisons, 14 (70%) have shown gains, 3 (15%) remained stable, and 3 (15%) declined, showing a clear trend of improvement and a stronger overall showing than in English/Language Arts.
- In 2003-04, the trend toward ever higher numbers of special education students tested continued, and greater percentages of special education students passed the test at every level.

TABLE 8: ISTEP MATH SCORES: CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS Percent passing the standard for each grade	
Base Year: 1988-89 Spring Testing (March)	1990's Year 4: 1992-93 Spring Testing (March)
1990's Year 1: 1989-90 Spring Testing (March)	1990's Year 5: 1993-94 Spring Testing (March)
1990's Year 2: 1990-91 Spring Testing (March)	1990's Year 6: 1994-95 Spring Testing (March)
1990's Year 3: 1991-92 Spring Testing (March)	1990's Year 7: 1995-96 Spring Testing (March)
<b>FALL TESTING BEGINS</b> 1990's Year 8: 1996-97 Test not equated for annual comparisons and disaggregated data not available until '97-'98	

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		All Students / %		Spec.Ed. & / % Accommodations		General Ed. / % No Accommodations		
GRADE 3 MATH								
1990's Year 9:	1997-98	68,754	70%	1450	53%	67,304	71%	NEW
1990's Year 10:	1998-99	73,278	70%	4187	39%	69,091	72%	UP
2000's Year 1:	1999-00	75,150	73%	6549	45%	68,601	75%	UP
2000's Year 2:	2000-01	76,243	70%	8937	39%	67,306	74%	DOWN
2000's Year 3:	2001-02	75,922	70%	10,040	42%	65,882	74%	SAME
2000's Year 4:	2002-03	74,945	67%	10,404	41%	64,541	71%	NEW
2000's Year 5:	2003-04	75,893	71%	12,081	46%	63,812	76%	UP
GRADE 6 MATH								
1990's Year 9:	1997-98	63,966	60%	1305	28%	62,681	61%	NEW
1990's Year 10:	1998-99	67,859	59%	4173	20%	63,686	62%	UP
2000's Year 1:	1999-00	72,251	61%	6683	20%	65,593	65%	UP
2000's Year 2:	2000-01	77,170	62%	9635	21%	67,535	68%	UP
2000's Year 3:	2001-02	79,047	61%	10,300	23%	68,747	66%	DOWN
2000's Year 4:	2002-03	80,907	67%	11,054	29%	69,353	73%	NEW
2000's Year 5:	2003-04	79,851	72%	12,108	36%	67,743	79%	UP
GRADE 8 MATH								
1990's Year 9:	1997-98	64,825	67%	1516	27%	63,309	68%	NEW
1990's Year 10:	1998-99	69,319	63%	4760	19%	64,559	66%	** NEW
2000's Year 1:	1999-00	70,540	63%	6583	21%	63,957	67%	UP
2000's Year 2:	2000-01	71,889	64%	8731	20%	63,158	70%	UP
2000's Year 3:	2001-02	75,285	66%	9696	22%	65,589	73%	UP
2000's Year 4:	2002-03	77,713	66%	10,713	23%	67,000	73%	NEW
2000's Year 5:	2003-04	79,894	71%	11,619	29%	68,275	78%	UP
						** Gr. 8 standard was raised		
GRADE 10 MATH								
1990's Year 9:	1997-98	68,807	61%	5246	17%	63,561	64%	NEW
1990's Year 10:	1998-99	70,360	59%	6355	18%	64,005	64%	SAME
2000's Year 1:	1999-00	70,429	63%	7066	21%	63,363	68%	UP
2000's Year 2:	2000-01	71,041	67%	7783	24%	63,258	72%	UP
2000's Year 3:	2001-02	71,145	65%	7957	24%	63,188	70%	DOWN
2000's Year 4:	2002-03	70,973	68%	8557	27%	62,416	73%	UP
2000's Year 5:	2003-04	75,118	67%	10,025	28%	65,093	73%	SAME
	#UP	14 (70%)						
	#STABLE	3 (15%)						
	#DOWN	3 (15%)						
Data Source: Indiana Department of Education, Office of Assessment								

## 9. PERCENTAGE OF GRADUATES GOING TO COLLEGE

### WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

Each year, the Indiana Department of Education collects a report on the number of graduates going to college. Prior to 1995-96, it was not clear whether students attending a 2-year college program were properly counted. Beginning in 1995-96, the collection process added a category for attending 2-year college programs. Thus, a comparison with the previous year would be inappropriate.

Since Indiana's census population is comparatively low in the percentage of college graduates, governmental agencies and foundations in Indiana have taken a strong interest in encouraging students to attend and complete college. With large philanthropic and state programs working to help more students pursue college, this measure is of great interest to policy-makers in Indiana.

Since Report #1 was issued in May, 2000, the Indiana Department of Education has revised several of the numbers in Table 9. Revisions did not change the obvious and consistent upward trend in college aspirations.

More recently, the Indiana Guidance Report has asked 11<sup>th</sup> graders what they would like to do the first year after high school. Responses for three years are available for comparison to 12<sup>th</sup> grade aspirations.

The third data set available is a study available from Postsecondary Education Opportunity on the percent of high school graduates actually enrolling in postsecondary education at age 19. This data allows Indiana to be compared to the nation on actual college enrollment. It is collected every two years.

**INDIANA'S RANK AMONG STATES ON COLLEGE ENROLLMENT IMPROVED FROM 40TH IN 1986, TO 17TH IN 2000, TO 10TH IN 2002, THE LATEST YEAR AVAILABLE.**

### WHAT ARE THE TRENDS?

- The trend is clear: Far more Indiana graduates are going to college now than fifteen years ago. Over 71% now aspire to a 2-year or 4-year program.
- Except for a small decline in only one year (1994-95), the trend for fifteen years has been strongly and consistently positive.
- In the early 1990's, the percentage of students taking the SAT was far higher than the percentage of graduates going to college. By the end of the decade, the situation had been reversed and the percent aspiring to college is now higher.
- Actual enrollment data show that Indiana surpassed national levels starting in 1998. Indiana's rank among states on college enrollment improved from 40th in 1986, to 17th in 2000, to 10th in 2002, the latest year available.

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**TABLE 9:**  
**PERCENT OF PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES GOING TO COLLEGE**  
*Percent of graduates aspiring to and enrolling in 2-year or 4-year college programs*

	12th Grade Survey IDOE			11th Grade Survey ICPAC	Enrolled in College at Age 19	
					INDIANA	NATION
Base Year:	1988-89	<b>48.93% *</b>				
1990's Year 1:	1989-90	<b>51.46% *</b>	<b>UP</b>			
1990's Year 2:	1990-91	<b>51.54% *</b>	<b>UP</b>			
1990's Year 3:	1991-92	<b>53.46% *</b>	<b>UP</b>		<b>50.5%</b>	54.3%
1990's Year 4:	1992-93	<b>54.37% *</b>	<b>UP</b>			
1990's Year 5:	1993-94	<b>55.42% *</b>	<b>UP</b>		<b>55.0%</b>	57.1%
1990's Year 6:	1994-95	<b>55.28% *</b>	<b>DOWN</b>			
1990's Year 7:	1995-96	<b>61.15%</b>	<b>NEW</b>		<b>57.9%</b>	58.5%
1990's Year 8:	1996-97	<b>62.52%</b>	<b>UP</b>			
1990's Year 9:	1997-98	<b>63.89%</b>	<b>UP</b>		<b>60.5%</b>	57.3%
1990's Year 10:	1998-99	<b>64.87%</b>	<b>UP</b>			
2000's Year 1:	1999-00	<b>66.10%*</b>	<b>UP</b>		<b>60.0%</b>	56.7%
2000's Year 2:	2000-01	<b>67.68%</b>	<b>UP</b>			
2000's Year 3:	2001-02	<b>69.13%</b>	<b>UP</b>	85.70%	<b>62.4%</b>	56.6%
2000's Year 4:	2002-03	<b>70.48%</b>	<b>UP</b>	85.25%		
2000's Year 5:	2003-04	<b>71.06%</b>	<b>UP</b>	85.37%		

**Data Sources:**

Gr. 12: Indiana Department of Education, Div. of Educational Information Systems

Gr. 11: Indiana Guidance Report, See: [icpac.indiana.edu](http://icpac.indiana.edu)

Enrolled at 19: Postsecondary Education Opportunity, See: [www.postsecondary.org](http://www.postsecondary.org)

*\*Revised by Indiana Department of Education since Report #2 in June, 2001.*

## **10. ACADEMIC HONORS AND CORE 40 DIPLOMAS AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL GRADUATES OF PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS**

### **WHAT IS THE MEASURE?**

The Academic Honors diploma was introduced under the leadership of State Superintendent Dean Evans in the 1980's as a more academically rigorous option for students. Approved as a promulgated rule in March, 1987, students entering the 9th grade in 1987-88 and graduating in 1991 were the first to have the opportunity to plan their entire high school program to gain an Academic Honors diploma.

Instead of the required 38 credits, students had to take at least 47 credits to receive the Academic Honors diploma. Additional courses in math, science, social studies, and foreign language were included. While the Academic Honors diploma is an option for students to pursue, it is required that public high schools offer the courses which lead to an Academic Honors diploma. The number of such diplomas is a small factor in the school funding formula which determines the revenue available to each school corporation.

The Core 40 diploma was established in 1994 and first awarded in 1998. It is designed as an incentive to students to take more rigorous courses as a step toward later success in college or in the workplace.

Each year, high schools report the number of Academic Honors diplomas and Core 40 diplomas to the Indiana Department of Education as part of the report on graduation. The number of such diplomas is reported in Table 10 as a percentage of all graduates.

### **WHAT ARE THE TRENDS?**

- The trend has been up for the fifteen years studied. Every year, more students have qualified for the Academic Honors and Core 40 diplomas.
- After the first 4-year cycle of students with the opportunity to earn the Academic Honors diploma graduated in 1990-91, Indiana had 1 out of 14 qualifying for the higher standard. By 2003-04, that figure had jumped to more than 1 out of 4.
- Over one-fourth of all students now earn the Academic Honors diploma and over one-third earn the Core 40 diploma.

**EVERY YEAR, MORE STUDENTS HAVE  
QUALIFIED FOR THE ACADEMIC HONORS  
AND CORE 40 DIPLOMAS.**



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<b>TABLE 10: ACADEMIC HONORS AND CORE 40 DIPLOMAS AS PERCENTAGES OF ALL PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES</b>					
		<b>% Receiving Academic Honors Diplomas</b>	<b>% Receiving Core 40 Diplomas</b>	<b>% Total **</b>	
<b>Base Year:</b>	1988-89	<b>3.66%</b>			
<b>1990's Year 1:</b>	1989-90	<b>5.12%</b>			<b>UP</b>
<b>1990's Year 2:</b>	1990-91	<b>7.17%</b>			<b>UP</b>
<b>1990's Year 3:</b>	1991-92	<b>8.57%</b>			<b>UP</b>
<b>1990's Year 4:</b>	1992-93	<b>9.44%</b>			<b>UP</b>
<b>1990's Year 5:</b>	1993-94	<b>11.00%</b>			<b>UP</b>
<b>1990's Year 6:</b>	1994-95	<b>12.14%</b>			<b>UP</b>
<b>1990's Year 7:</b>	1995-96	<b>13.82%</b>			<b>UP</b>
<b>1990's Year 8:</b>	1996-97	<b>15.33%</b>			<b>UP</b>
<b>1990's Year 9:</b>	1997-98	<b>18.42%</b>	<b>22.87%</b>	<b>41.29%</b>	<b>UP</b>
<b>1990's Year 10:</b>	1998-99	<b>20.73%</b>	<b>27.47%</b>	<b>48.20%</b>	<b>UP</b>
<b>2000's Year 1:</b>	<b>1999-00</b>	<b>23.53% *</b>	<b>31.08%</b>	<b>54.61%</b>	<b>UP</b>
<b>2000's Year 2:</b>	<b>2000-01</b>	<b>25.54%</b>	<b>31.99%</b>	<b>57.53%</b>	<b>UP</b>
<b>2000's Year 3:</b>	<b>2001-02</b>	<b>26.65%</b>	<b>33.88%</b>	<b>60.53%</b>	<b>UP</b>
<b>2000's Year 4:</b>	<b>2002-03</b>	<b>28.32%</b>	<b>34.79%</b>	<b>63.11%</b>	<b>UP</b>
<b>2000's Year 5:</b>	<b>2003-04</b>	<b>29.08%</b>	<b>36.13%</b>	<b>65.21%</b>	<b>UP</b>
Data Source: Indiana Department of Education, Div. of Educational Information Systems *IDOE revised the 1999-00 figure since June, 2001, when it was reported as 23.46%. **IDOE included students who earned both special diplomas in the Academic Honors count; thus adding the two columns shows the percentage receiving at least one special diploma.					

## CONCLUSION

The performance of Indiana's public schools continued to improve in 2003-2004. The positive trends of the past fifteen years have not changed the expectations that schools must do even better in the future. Indiana's Public Law 221-1999 and the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* are designed to institutionalize improvement. Our democratic institutions depend on an active, literate citizenry. In an economy driven by global competition, a highly skilled workforce is vital for a prosperous future. Dire concerns in *A Nation at Risk* (1983) of a sinking economy due to poor schools disappeared with the economic boom of the 1990's. No one, however, is slowing efforts to continually improve our schools.

The year since Report #5 was issued in July, 2004, has been eventful. Determinations of Adequate Yearly Progress under the *No Child Left Behind Act* have been issued and debated. The federal law has focused media attention on so-called "failing" schools, and readers sometime misinterpret such reports to conclude that public education as a whole is failing. Nothing could be further from the truth, as this report shows. Public schools in Indiana are succeeding. Clear improvement is shown by the 15-year trends on all ten tables reported, and on seven of the ten for the 2003-04 data.

**PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN  
INDIANA ARE  
SUCCEEDING.**

The historical record provided by this report can serve as a guide for reflections on changes to come. Indiana leaders are seeking to make a positive story even better, especially in the efforts to eliminate achievement gaps. The data continue to show that Indiana public schools have a far better winning record than they are given credit for. School reform efforts must be based on accurate knowledge of effective improvements already implemented so as not to undercut the current progress documented clearly in this report.

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## APPENDIX

### ***Comparing Old and New Graduation Rates***

A close look at the current method of calculating graduation rate reveals why it is being replaced. While it was a formula commonly used across the nation in 1987, the current rate is not linked to actually earning a diploma. It is, in fact, a survival rate showing how many do not drop out. It has the effect of counting as graduates all who do not drop out. It credits a school for all students who complete four years, regardless of whether a diploma is earned. If no students drop out, the current method can produce a rate of 100.

Two groups, however, do not graduate, even though they do not drop out: 1) students who do not pass the GQE but remain in school, and 2) cognitively disabled students who do not even take the GQE, a decision made in their case conference. These factors, along with the unknown number who did not return after summer vacation, led to confusion and lack of confidence in the old method after the GQE was required for graduation starting in 2000. Critics of public schools made accusations of distortions, but educators didn't like the old definition either, supporting plans for a new method while following the law and reporting under the old method.

The new method is scheduled to be used for the first time for the Class of 2006. The new method counts only those who actually receive a diploma. It was developed to show the percent of 9<sup>th</sup> graders who graduate in four years, after detailed adjustments for students who move in or out of the cohort. These adjustments could not have been made in 1987 when A+ was passed because they require a new technology of student testing numbers which allow each student to be tracked. These testing numbers have only been in use since 2003.

Under this system, the new rate can not rise to 100. Three groups will be counted in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade base who will not graduate in four years. Two groups are cited above: 1) students who fail the GQE and 2) nearly all cognitively disabled students. The third group is the portion of 9<sup>th</sup> graders who have been retained. By definition, they will require at least five years to graduate.

In theory, high schools could work to get all students to pass the GQE and therefore eliminate group one. In practice, however, the State Board of Education adopted high standards on the test, setting cut off scores that failed 32% in English/Language Arts and 36% in Math on the 2004 test. Given these high standards, it is likely that some number of students will not pass and will not graduate. Estimates of this number range from 10% to 15%, although no precise number is available.

Regarding group two, schools have no control over how many cognitively disabled enter as 9<sup>th</sup> graders, but all are welcomed and provided a free appropriate public education. Statewide, the size of the cognitively disabled group in recent cohorts is 2.5%, as seen in Figure 2.

ACT

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**FIGURE 2: PERCENT OF 9TH GRADERS WITH COGNITIVE DISABILITIES**

Graduating Class	Total 9th Graders 4 yrs earlier	MiMH in Gr. 9	MoMH in Gr. 9	SPMH in Gr. 9	MH in Gr. 9	Total of 4	Percent of 9th gr. with cognitive disabilities
2002	82,509	1,525	318	77	55	1,975	2.39%
2003	80,955	1,571	323	56	63	2,013	2.49%
2004	79,871	1,546	320	70	54	1,990	2.49%
MiMH = Mildly Mentally Handicapped				MoMH = Moderately Mentally Handicapped			
SPMH = Severe Profound Mentally Handicapped				MH = Multiply Handicapped			
Data Source: 1998-2004 Data from the Division of Exceptional Learners, Indiana Department of Education							

Regarding the third group, the 9<sup>th</sup> grade base enrollment always includes a large number of retained 9<sup>th</sup> graders who did not pass enough courses to be counted as 10<sup>th</sup> graders. Figure 3 shows that this retained group, which by definition will not graduate in four years, makes up about 7% of the class.

**FIGURE 3: THREE WAYS TO VIEW THE 9TH GRADE BASE ENROLLMENT IN 2004**

2004 State Total 9th Grade Public School Enrollment	87,758	
2004 9th Graders Taking ISTEP	80,997	
Difference from 9th Grade Enrollment	6,761	-7.7%
(By state rule, retained 9th graders must take the 10th grade GQE test)		
2003 State Total 8th Grade Public School Enrollment	81,441	
Difference from 9th Grade Enrollment	6,317	-7.2%
<i>Conclusion: Estimated percentage of retained students in 9th grade base is approximately 7%</i>		
<i>Data Source: Indiana Department of Education</i>		

Even if the drop out problem is solved and all students stay in school, the highest potential mark for the new rate will stand at 100 minus the size of these three groups. While it is premature to know the new rate, it is clear that the new rate will produce numbers far lower than the old rate. Figures 2 and 3 provide evidence that the new rate would not rise above 90. If we assume 10% fail to graduate due to failure to pass the GQE and then add in the 2.5% cognitively disabled (Fig. 2) and the 7% retained in 9<sup>th</sup> grade (Fig. 3), the new rate would not rise above 80.

## ***NOTES***

**ACT**

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**SAT**

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